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Taxonomic notes on the genus *Paralastor* (Hymenoptera, Vespidae)

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Abstract

Taxonomic and distributional notes are given for the eumenine genus *Paralastor*. New synonymy includes *Paralastor albifrons* (Fabricius) = *Paralastor habilis* Perkins; *Paralastor brunneus* (de Saussure) = *Paralastor multicolor* Perkins; *Paralastor maculiventris* (de Saussure) = *Paralastor elegans* Perkins.

Keywords

Australia, mud wasps, potter wasps, synonymy

Introduction

I recently visited the Natural History Museum in London to study types of the eumenine genus *Paralastor*. Most of the types of species described by Perkins (1914a, 1914b) are housed there, as well as those of some other authors. Examination of the specimens turned up some new synonymy, and clarified some other points, as I shall explain.

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Taxonomic notes

Paralastor albifrons (Fabricius 1775). The species was described from "Nova Hollandia" in the Banks collection in London. De Saussure (1856: 335) redescribed the type, and questioned the locality, believing it instead to be from an oceanic archipelago. Perkins (1914a) described *P. habilis* from "North Queensland." He did not study the type of *P. albifrons*, but based on Meade-Waldo's examination, stated (p. 584) "I infer it should be placed next to *P habilis*. In fact, I do not feel sure that the latter may not be a variety or race of the Fabrician species" and (p. 566, quoting de Saussure) that it was "superficially distinct by having only 'deux très petits points orangés sur le prothorax' and the apical band of the 2nd abdominal band semicircularly emarginate." Bequaert (1928: 55) saw the type of *P. albifrons* and stated "This appears to be a species of *Paralastor* differing from any of those studied by R. C. L. Perkins." I examined the type of *P. albifrons*, and it does indeed key to *P. habilis* in the key of Perkins (1914a). It scarcely differs from *P. habilis* in color: the pronotal marks (which are dull yellow, not orange) are small, and the second metasomal tergum band more widely emarginate, but these are minor color variations. I was unable to examine the type of *P. habilis*, which is now missing from the Natural History Museum, and possibly lost. I did compare the type of *P. subhabilis* Perkins, 1914, which Perkins keyed with *P habilis*: it is very similar, but has more abundant pale markings. It is a female, while the type of *P. albifrons* is a male, so the more abundant color markings are perhaps significant. The punctation on the tegulae also seems a little less coarse. Therefore, I do not take the step of synonymizing *P. subhabilis* as well, but *P. habilis* is clearly a synonym of *P. albifrons*: *Paralastor albifrons* (Fabricius) = *P. habilis* Perkins, New Synonymy.

Paralastor brunneus (de Saussure 1856). This species was described from "La Nouvelle-Hollande" and there are no other records. Perkins (1914a) described *P. multicolor* from "Port Darwin." In his key he separated *P. brunneus* and *P. multicolor* only by color differences of the head, but in the text (p. 613) he stated that "the edges of the lateral deflexed parts of the clypeus are not so sharply defined" in *multicolor*. I compared the types of these two species, and there is no appreciable difference in the clypeus, while examination of a large number of specimens collected in the Northern Territory shows extensive color variation (as Perkins acknowledged for *multicolor*), with both taxa within the range. The synonymy is confirmed: *Paralastor brunneus* (de Saussure) = *P. multicolor* Perkins, New Synonymy.

Paralastor maculiventris (de Saussure 1856). This species was described from "L'Australie" and there are no other records. Perkins (1914a) described *P. elegans* from "N. Queensland," and stated of *P. maculiventris* (p. 601) "I think it probable that this species may be identical with my *P. elegans*." He mentioned some color differences, and that the metanotum was "hardly perceptibly tuberculate" in *P. elegans*. I compared the types of these two species, and a number of specimens collected in the Northern Territory, and they are indeed the same species. The synonymy is confirmed: *Paralastor maculiventris* (de Saussure) = *P. elegans* Perkins, New Synonymy.

Paralastor nautarum (de Saussure 1856). This species was described from "L'Australie" and there are no other records. Perkins (1914a) did not see the type, but included this species in his key, stating (p. 566) that it was "Probably tabulated rightly." I examined the type, and it indeed keys correctly, although the markings are rufous, not golden, and the wings are mostly hyaline, being only infumate along the costal margin.

Paralastor smithii (de Saussure 1856). This species was described from "L'Australie" and there are no other records. Perkins (1914a) did not see the type, and was unable to place this species. I examined the type, and it keys to *P. placens* Perkins, 1914, in the key of Perkins, but is distinct in having a narrower clypeus (the markings are rufous, but they are in the type of *P. placens* as well, not golden as stated by Perkins).

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